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BERLIN, 29 décembre.

S'il est vrai, monsieur, que vous ayez quelque manuscrit sous mon nom, soit une ancienne lettre écrite à monsieur König, soit un détail d'expériences de physique, intitulé Séance etc., je vous prie avec la plus vive instance de ne les point imprimer. Je vous paierai ce que vous voudrez et je vous dédommagerai de plus d'une manière. Vous y pouvez compter et je me flatte que vous aurez égard aux prières de Mr. König et aux miennes. Je vous aurai une obligation extrême et suis parfaitement, monsieur,

Votre très humble et très
obéissant serviteur

VOLTAIRE.

This letter, if not of prime importance, is interesting in that it probably is, so far as we can judge, an echo of the famous quarrel between the German mathematician, Samuel König, and Maupertuis. It will be recalled that a dispute had arisen between König and Maupertuis, President of Frederick's Academy, over a problem of physics. Voltaire took part in the dispute with the celebrated *Diatribe du Docteur Akakia*, which earned him the keen displeasure of his royal patron. This satire was published in 1752.¹

König, at one time the secretary and teacher of Mme du Châtelet, had gone, in 1749, to La Haye, as professor of mathematics and philosophy. Voltaire left Berlin March 26, 1753. It seems to me that Voltaire's letter was probably written in December, 1752. The *Diatribe* was finished in October, 1752. The first edition, published that month in Potsdam, was burned about the end of November, by the orders of Frederick. Again printed at Leyden (Luzac), all the copies sent to Germany were seized and burned, December 24.

The letter to Gosse would be explained by Voltaire's evident anxiety to recover a certain compromising document whose publication would aggravate the already bitter feelings of Frederick. The reference to "un détail d'expériences intitulé Séance etc.,"—Voltaire himself was undecided as to the nature of the manuscript—may point to the eight-page *Séance mémorable* written upon the occasion of the same quarrel, though not published at once.² Voltaire's "instance" betokens an anxiety produced by an event out of the ordinary, and it may well be laid to the cause mentioned.

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¹ Bengesco, *Bibliographie*, II, 63.

² *Ibid.*, III, 64.

A NOTE ON "AN ENGLISH FRIEND OF CHARLES OF ORLÉANS"

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—A variant to No. xiv of the English ballades printed in my article with the above title (*Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, xxvi, 1, p. 165) is to be found in ms. Lambeth 306, leaf 137. It has been printed by Dr. Furnivall (*Pol. Rel. and Love Poems*, E. E. T. S. 15, re-ed., p. 68). The ballade has been considerably altered in the Lambeth text, each stanza being expanded from the seven-line to the eight-line ballade. A notable change is the alteration of the dating, December 5 in the original ballade (line 21) to an indefinite date, suitable for any lover's use.

Accompanying this ballade in ms. Lambeth 306 are three other ballades, which resemble closely the ballade under consideration. It is not impossible that these represent a similar reworking by a later hand, of ballades by the friend of Orléans.

H. N. MACCRACKEN.

New Haven.

A NOTE ON MUSSET

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—In perhaps the finest emotional passage of Musset's *Nuit de Décembre*, occur the following lines:

Ah ! faible femme, orgueilleuse insensée,
Malgré toi, tu t'en souviendras !
Pourquoi, grand Dieu ! mentir à sa pensée ?
Pourquoi ces pleurs, cette gorge oppressée,
Ces sanglots, si tu n'aimais pas ?

In these lines, Musset has followed pretty closely a much less well known poem, *A Laure*, published three years earlier, as will appear from comparison:

Si tu ne m'aimais pas, dis-moi, fille insensée,
Que balbutiais-tu dans ces fatales nuits ?
Exerçais-tu ta langue à railler ta pensée ?
Que voulaient donc ces pleurs, cette gorge oppressée,
Ces sanglots et ces cris ?

It will be seen that in these two five-line passages, three essential words, *insensée*, *pleurs*, *sanglots*, and one phrase, *cette gorge oppressée*, are absolutely identical; one hemistich, *Si tu*